Mendon Historical Society
Mendon, Massachusetts

THAYER-ALDRICH TRIBE

By Marcus M. Aldrich, Mendon

Paper read at the annual meeting of the Mendon Historical Society in Mendon, October 8, 1908, written by Marcus M. Aldrich.

It is natural for himans to have a pride in their kinship and at proper times to give expression thereto. We therefore crave your kind indulgence at this time while we present to you some of the historic, characteristic and genealogical facts concerning the descendants of two of Mendon's pioneer settlers, viz. Ferdinando Thayer and George Aldrich, they being among the first to reach the Mendon territory as required, before the seventh month, 1663, and to both of whom the writer traces ancestry.

The first learned of George Aldrich is of his marriage September 3, 1629, to Katherine Seald, and as about three years later he emigrated to America from Derbyshire, England, it is presumed that Derbyshire was where the marriage took place.

The first found of him in America is in 1634, when a one-acre house lot was set off to him in Dorchester. Houselots in those days were generally larger than an acre, but as George Aldrich was a tailor by trade, the smallnes of his houselot is explained. Whether he built a house on this one-acre lot we do not know; neither is it known how long was his stay in Dorchester, but it was for some little time at least, for we find that both he and his wife Katherine became members of the Dorchester church.

In 1640 we find our ancestor in the town of Braintree as owner of about eight acres of land with buildings, and as he came from Braintree when coming to Mendon, and the births of the greater part of his children are recorded there, it is presumed that from 1640, or therabouts, to 1663, Braintree was his home.

The authorities who had the matter in charge fixed the rule of settling the new township of Mendon, that those who had been accepted as worthy to become members of the seemingly select company should reach the new territory before the seventh month, 1663, and as stated above, Ferdinando Thayer and George Aldrich were among the first to comply with this requirement.

Just how the division of houselots was arrived at, whether by a committee chosen for the purpose, the drawing of lots, or by squatter sovereignty, can not now be determined; but by our Proprietors' Records we find that Ferdinando Thayer had a houselot set off to him about a mile southerly of the present center of Mendon, at what for many years was known as the Scammell Aldrich place. Scammell Aldrich was of the Thayer line and until his death in 1869 this Thayer homestead was held by Ferdinando Thayer's descendants.

From the fact that two Thayer genealogies have been published it seems unnecessary for me to elaborate further in this direction, so with the statement that Ferdinando's daughter Huldah will later on occupy an important position in this sketch, I will leave the direct Thayer part of my paper and return to that of George Aldrich.

"God brought me to America from Derbyshire, England, November 6, 1631." These are the words of George Aldrich, the progenitor of the American Aldrich race, and in which his unqualified faith in the over-ruling power of God in all things is clearly expressed.

In Mendon George Aldrich had a houselot set off to him a little southerly of the present Mendon village, which lot to-day comprises the southerly portion of the Gilbert Gaskill farm. Until 1786 the homestead of George Aldrich was in the hands of his descendants. At this time Rev. Caleb Alexander, the sixth settled minister of Mendon, bought the ancient Aldrich homestead, together

with the John Harber houselot, which sometime previous had come into the possession of Stephen Aldrich, a great grandson of the first George.

As stated above, George Aldrich was a tailor, and it is concluded that it was by his trade he gained subsistence, for with but one acre of land at Dorchester and only eight at Braintree it would appear that he was paying but little attention to agriculture. It is also found that of his 40 acre houselot at Mendon two-thirds of it were deeded to two of his sons, John and Peter, thus leaving him with but thirteen and one-third acres in his home lot, and as he was about 60 years of age when coming to Mendon it is doubtful about his ever engaging much in farming here.

George Aldrich had eleven children, all of whom were born before his coming to Mendon, his youngest son, Jacob, being seven years old at that time. George died in Mendon March 1, 1682, and his wife, Katherine, Jan. 11, 1693. His first child, Abel, was probably born in England, and as I find no trace of him or his birth date, it is concluded that he died there. Joseph, his second child married Patience Osborne and came to Mendon with his father, he also becoming a proprietor.

Joseph's houselot of 20 acres comprises the northerly portion of the N. R. George farm, extending across the road and taking in the southerly portion of the present home place of Julius A. George. The house of Jacob Aldrich stood in the vicinity of where our former village blacksmith, the late John Barry, lived and died. Joseph Aldrich stayed in Mendon until about the time of his father's death in 1682 when he removed to what is now Smithfield, Rhode Island, in which state many of his descendants are still found; among whom was the Hon. Nelson W. Aldrich, the financial leader of the United States Senate, whose daughter married John D. Rockefeller, Jr.

Joseph Aldrich was of the Quaker faith, and tradition has it that on this account his house was spared at the burning of the town in 1676 by King Philip's warriors.

The next three of George Aldrich's children all died young. John, the sixth child, married Sarah Thompson of Mendon. He had a third part of his father's houselot and may properly be termed a proprietor. His lot of thirteen and one-third acres comprised the southerly portion of the said N. R. George farm and his house is supposed to have been in the vicinity of where the Nathan George "Yellow house", so-called, formerly stood in front of the town's burying-ground.

John Aldrich removed from Mendon to Bridgewater about the time of the King Philip War, where he is supposed to have lived until his death.

Sarah, the seventh child of George Aldrich, married John Bartlett, who for a time lived in Mendon in the vicinity of the Benjamin Albee Corn Mill. John O. Austin, publisher of the Genealogical Dictionary of Rhode Island, says that John and Sarah (Aldrich) Bartlett are the progenitors of the Rhode Island branch of Bartletts.

Peter, the eighth child, has not been positively traced, but is believed to have removed to Long Island and become the progenitor of the Aldrich branch who for many generations have existed there.

Mercy, the ninth child, married John Randall, a son of Robert Randall of Weymouth, and as the births of some of their children are recorded in Mendon, it is evident that they lived here for a while at least. It is found, however, that they subsequently removed to Weymouth and spent their days on his father Robert's farm.

Martha, the eleventh child, married John Dunbar, and they had a son born in Mendon.

I will now go back to the tenth child, Jacob, who married Ferdinando Thayer's daughter, Huldah, and from here on the title of my paper, "The Thayer- Aldrich Tribe" applies. Jacob Aldrich and Huldah Thayer were married November 3, 1675 and in the main it will be upon their desdendants that the remainder of this paper will treat. Jacob settled in Mendon on the Aldrich homestead which was bequeathed to him by his father, and while I do not wish to speak disparagingly of my own side of the house, I feel forced to admit that of the innumerable descendants of Jacob Aldrich and Huldah Thayer the Thayer blood has predominated. They had a family of twelve children, the most of whom grew to adult age. To six of their sons sixty-five children were born, and with eighteen children born to their daughters, eighty-three grandchildren are credited to Jacob Aldrich and Huldah Thayer.

Jacob Aldrich, the husband of Huldah Thayer, died October 2, 1695, when his youngest child was less than a year old and his oldest child less than twenty, thus leaving his widow with a large family to care for, about half of whom were less than ten or twelve years of age. Jacob died intestate, his widow settling his estate, which in real and personal inventoried 267 pounds 2 shillings. From the probate records of Suffolk County it is learned that so much difficulty was found in dividing out the several portions that the farm was finally sold, by order of the probate judge, to Jacob Aldrich,Jr, for the sum of 183 pounds.

The widow Huldah with all this young brood to care for was now placed under a great responsibility in bringing them up to where they could care for themselves, for as no record is found of the appointment of guardians to any of these minor children, it is concluded that she had them all under her personal charge. Widow Huldah may well be credited with being a courageous woman, for with all her many cares it is found that a second marriage was contracted by her with Ebenezer Staples, a son of the first Abraham, who was also a pioneer of Mendon.

Jacob Aldrich, Jr. married Margery Hayward, daughter of Samuel and Mehitable (Thompson) Hayward. They had a large Family. A daughter, Mercy, married Israel Taft, son of Robert, Jr. and grandson of the original Robert Taft of Mendon. Israel Taft and Mercy Aldrich were the parents of nineteen children.

It was Israel Taft's son Samuel who kept the old Taft Hotel in Uxbridge, made famous from the fact that in his journeying from Boston to Hartford in 1789 George Washington, after being refused entertainment at the old Amidon Hotel in Mendon, journeyed on to Uxbridge where, at the above Taft Hotel, he was cheerfully welcomed and royally entertained, and being so well pleased with the kind and gracious attention paid hime by the two young daughters of Mr. Taft, waaled, after reaching Hartford, to pay them homage by sending them handsome presents of dress goods and gold.

Huldah Taft, a daughter of Israel and Mercy(Aldrich) Taft married David Daniels of what is now Blackstone.

Peter, the eighth child of Jacob and Huldah (Thayer) Aldrich married Hannah Hayward, sister of the wives of Jacob, Jr. and Seth Aldrich. They settled in South Uxbridge and reared a family of remarkable strength and vitality- so much so that wherever we have found their descendants they have been boastful of their superior athletic skill and power. Wrestling was formerly of more common practice then now and many is the story I have heard told in regard to how this Peter Aldrich branch could overcome their competitors in these old-time wrestling matches.

Jacob and Huldah's ninth child, John, married Penelope Pray, daughter of John and Sarah (Brown) Pray of Providence, R.I. They settled in Uxbridge.

The tenth child of Jacob and Huldah(Thayer) Aldrich was Moses, and of all their children his career was the most notable. He married Hannah White, daughter of Joseph and Lydia White, and settled in Mendon. They had twelve children all of whom lived till the youngest was 60 years of age. The house in which Moses Aldrich lived formerly stood a little back of the stone house where Charles B. Williams now lives. He was a farmer, like nearly everyone else in those days, had a blacksmith shop , a wine press and a tannery, the latter being located just over Muddy Brook to the right, on the road to Spindleville, so-called; some of the hair from off the hides tanned there having been ploughed out of the ground in recent years. He also had a sawmill which stood on Muddy Brook just above the Timothy Ellis place, now owned by Albion A. Gaskill. Besides all these varied business occupations Moses Aldrich was a noted Quaker preacher, occupying and holding a very high position with the Society of Friends, commonly called Quakers. He was sent out under their direction as a missionary all through the American colonies preaching the faith to which he allied himself. He also visited the Island of Barbadoes at two different times and finally visited England and Ireland on his above-appointed mission. By what seems a reliable tradition, it is said that on one of his visits to the Island of Barbadoes he secured funds from some of the rich Quakers there which was used to build the former Friends' or Quaker Meeting-house, which some of us can remember as it stood in the old Quaker graveyard just below the Mendon village. It was in this old Quaker meeting-house, as understood, that Moses Aldrich expounded the Quaker faith until about the time of his death in 1761. I remember of once attending public worship at this old meeting-house when a boy, but as the spirit moved no one to public utterance, the service consisted of silent prayer and friendly shaking of hands.

Of the fifty-two donors to our Founders'Park thirty of them are of the Thayer-Aldrich line. Founders' Park is a memorial to our most honored dead, it being so subscribed for and established, and consequently is sacred ground and as such should be forever kept inviolate.